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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 000108

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NSC FOR SHAPIRO AND PASCUAL

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: JANUARY 18 SHARM AL SHAYKH: THE ANTI-DOHA
CONFERENCE

Classified By: Ambassador Margaret Scobey
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Egypt convened on less than 24 hours notice, six European leaders, King Abdullah of Jordan, President Gul of Turkey, Palestinian President Abbas, and the SYGs of the UN and Arab League for a meeting in Sharm Al Shaykh January 18. The purpose of the meeting was the meeting itself * a demonstration of key support for Egyptian leadership in resolving the Gaza crisis. The Egyptians did not invite the U.S. or Russia to attend, although on the advice of the Secretary they belatedly included resident ambassadors to "observe." No statement was issued, although a press conference was held following the hour-long session that essentially allowed each participant to reprise their interventions for the press.

¶2. (C) European participants were: UK Prime Minister Brown, French President Sarkozy, Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero, German Chancellor Merkel, Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi, and Czech Prime Minister Topolanek in his EU Presidency capacity. Sarkozy won the award for most flattery of Egyptian President Mubarak during his rambling five minute intervention, while Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero demonstrated the greatest personal grief on behalf of the Palestinians. Overall, the participants focused on: support for Egypt, encouragement to all the parties to respect the ceasefire, immediate attention to humanitarian needs, and addressing steps to assure the ceasefire be durable -- regular opening of all border crossings, prevent Hamas from rearming, reconstruction needs, and the urgent need to reenergize efforts to complete the peace process. Many participants anticipate that Egypt will host a conference in early/mid February to address urgent humanitarian needs of the Gazans. End Summary

Interventions

¶3. (SBU) President Mubarak spoke first, noting signs that a ceasefire may be taking place. Work remained to stabilize the ceasefire and assure the Israeli withdrawal. Egypt was working hard to arrange opening of the border crossings and to assure the blockage is lifted. Egypt, he said, was working hard to secure its borders and was ready to accept offers of new technology and equipment from the U.S. and Germany; he reiterated that Egypt would not accept foreign observers on the Egyptian side of the border. He saw the need for reconstruction and offered that Egypt would host an initial meeting. Egypt would also continue its efforts to forge Palestinian reconciliation between the PA and "factions," which he saw as important for stability. The main requirement, however, was pushing forward to finding a genuine peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

14. (SBU) Highlights of Interventions:

--President Sarkozy focused on support for Egypt and Abu Mazen; he called on the U.S. to engage quickly and endorsed the two state solution. He said France was also ready to cooperate on counter smuggling efforts.

--Prime Minister Brown also noted strong support for Egypt and called for all parties to respect the ceasefire in order to allow urgent humanitarian access; he spoke to the need both for regular open border crossings as well as for preventing arms smuggling; he stressed need to build on Arab Peace Initiative.

--Chancellor Merkel reiterated the humanitarian and ceasefire concerns of her peers and also pledged that the EU would work with the new U.S. president to address all the issues at play. She said Germany would talk to Israel and others about the need to monitor sea and land borders, stressing that Germany had confidence in Egypt and was not talking about putting forces in Egypt, only technical assistance.

--King Abdullah of Jordan had the shortest remarks. He said that the Arab Peace Initiative must survive and encouraged his EU colleagues to reach out early to the new U.S. administration to engage early in search for durable peace. If progress were not made in 2009, he predicted they leaders would be reprising the current meeting in the future.

--President Gul spoke to the human tragedy of Gaza and said that Turkish diplomatic efforts in Damascus were in support of the Egyptian led effort. He called for ceasefire, open

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borders, stopping smuggling, and reconstruction. He said there needed to be a mechanism to oversee the ceasefire and called for the revival of the peace process on all its tracks.

--Prime Minister Zapatero spoke mostly to the humanitarian disaster and the "23 days of sorrow and horror," pledging Spanish help.

--Prime Minister Berlusconi recalled spending millions in the 90s to reach peace, saying that he had started a Marshall Plan for the Palestinians, working with President Bush, but reached only 6% of his goals. He described Italian humanitarian efforts underway and pledged Italian readiness to supply sea support to counter maritime smuggling.

--SYG Ban Ki Moon described his meeting earlier that day with Syrian President Bashar Al Assad and was encouraged that Syria would support a ceasefire. He said that he would launch an immediate assessment mission to look at what Gaza needed immediately and would announce a flash appeal within about 10 days. He anticipated a subsequent report and meeting in Cairo to address urgent assistance needs within about three weeks. He said that in order to prevent a recurrence, a fixed system to assure open border crossings was needed via a return to the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access and that Palestinian reconciliation must be achieved.

--SYG Amre Moussa focused on need for Israel to withdraw. He criticized the focus on smuggling, stating that smuggling resulted from the Israeli blockade of Gaza and the closure of the border crossings. He emphasized the requirements of the Fourth Geneva Convention. He ended by stressing the need for real, quick progress on the peace process itself; he noted that some already called for a withdrawal of the Arab Peace Initiative; he said that if the "international parties did not use it," he predicted the Arab Peace Initiative would not be kept on the table.

--President Abbas recognized that Egypt had shouldered many burdens for the sake of the Palestinians. He denounced the Israeli massacre and genocide of the past three weeks. He reiterated the need for a consensus Palestinian government to

carry them toward elections. The first step was the need to get Rafah reopened along the 2005 AMA. He asked again for international forces to protect Palestinians and reaffirmed his support for a two state solution. He warned against thinking the Arab Peace Initiative could be retracted, noting it had been endorsed by successive Arab League and OIC summits.

Donor Conference

14. (C) EU Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner told the Ambassador during lunch that the EU hoped to separate discussion of reconstruction from humanitarian needs. She was comfortable with the proposed meeting in Egypt in February, but insisted that it should not be called a "donors conference" but an "immediate needs conference." She said the EU would not be ready to put serious money into reconstructing Gaza until a stable, PA-controlled government would be in place. She hoped that holding out pledges for reconstruction contingent upon Palestinian reconciliation would help press Hamas to accede to Egyptian reconciliation.

15. (U) At the conclusion of the meeting, the Europeans headed to Jerusalem for discussions with the government of Israel, while the Arabs set out for Kuwait for the Arab League Economic Summit.
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